

Kremlin Unlikely To Assert Rule

By David Remnick
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, April 10—Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev said today that he had not ruled out the possibility of overriding the Lithuanian parliament and declaring direct presidential rule in the republic, but would take such an "extreme measure" only "if the situation there develops into a civil conflict."

Speaking to a congress of the Young Communist League, Gorbachev termed Lithuania's March 11 declaration of independence an "adventure" and an "overnight coup." He repeated his call for the republic to hold a referendum on independence.

Gorbachev's statement came one day after his cabinet issued a warning that Lithuania could face further economic and political sanctions.

At a news conference today, Gorbachev's spokesman, Arkady Maslennikov, said that the Soviet leadership will not necessarily insist that Lithuania repeal its independence declaration, but that the republic "at least" must declare a "moratorium or freeze" on passing laws that contradict the Soviet constitution.

Maslennikov said such a moratorium could give the Lithuanian leadership an opportunity to "save face" and open the way to formal talks with Moscow. He indicated that Moscow was prepared to tighten supplies of oil and gas to the republic, but gave no specifics of any economic sanctions.

According to official media reports, Gorbachev told the Young Communist League that a "divorce" between Moscow and Lithuania was possible only on the basis of a newly adopted Soviet law on secession.

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